Reviewer's report

Title: The clinimetric qualities of patient-assessed instruments for measuring chronic ankle instability: A systematic review.

Version: 1 Date: 11 September 2006

Reviewer: Cornelia Van den Ende

Reviewer's report:

General
The authors performed a systematic review of patient based measures of ankle stability. The paper is well written and relevant. However, the inclusion criteria and procedures for selection of instruments might have been too strict to warrant a complete overview of all available instruments.

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

Introduction
1. The introduction lacks an overview of earlier studies on this topic. In a quick search of the literature I found the following references of related publications not cited in this paper:


The authors should in a more extensive way emphasize the relevance of their study and explain in what aspects their study differs from other inventories of outcome measures regarding ankle instability / function.

Methods
2. The inclusion procedure is not clearly described, and possible inadequate. There are two levels of the inclusion procedure to be distinguished, inclusion on the level of articles and inclusion on the level of instruments. Authors failed to make this distinction. In figure 1 it is suggested that selection of articles took place on the basis of title and abstract. It is not possible to identify instruments in this manner: I expect that the results of the computerized search contained many references to clinical trials or follow up studies. In many studies not all used outcome measures are mentioned in the abstract. In my opinion it is very likely that the inclusion procedure was not adequate to identify relevant studies. The only reference to the Ankle Joints Functional Assessment Tool is an observational study, in which the instrument was used to describe the ankle function of patients. I am not convinced that there are no other references to this tool, describing its clinical properties.

3. The exclusion criteria are too strict. Instruments were excluded if no full version of the instrument was available in the identified articles. I recommend to contact authors to ask for a full version and/or to retrieve original publications describing the particular instruments.

4. Discussion: Authors identified three instruments described in only three articles. Authors should comment in the discussion on the few number of publications they found.

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

5. Figure 2: There is no need to incorporate the number of articles per database in this figure. This information seems a little bit misleading: I doubt that all identified references were found in only one database, many databases have a considerable overlap. Please add explanation of abbreviations.

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

6 Methods: references of relevant publications were scanned. Which publications were considered relevant? How many publications were retrieved in this way?
What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests.